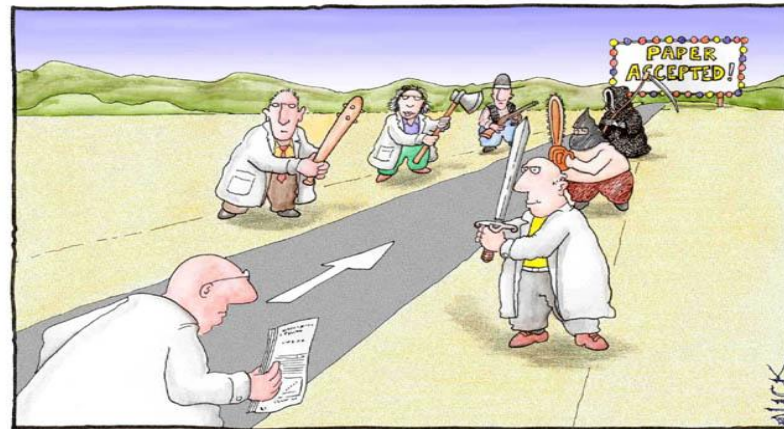


# Why don't the Reviewers Get it?

## An ECRs perspective on publications



Most scientists regarded the new streamlined peer-review process as 'quite an improvement.'

**Dr Bev Muhlhausler**

School of Agriculture, Food and Wine, The University of Adelaide

# **You've done the experiment, you have the data...so now what????**

- Writing papers takes time!
- Each paper you write should tell a story – taking the time to think about your data carefully before you start pays off
- Start with the results section to sort out the story
- Discuss the story with your colleagues/co-authors early in the process

# STARTING TO WRITE



www.phdcomics.com

# Getting started -The Results Section

## Start with an outline

1. Work out your story
2. Plan sub-headings
3. Work out what to leave out – beware of having too many correlations or too much information
4. Put the main results up front
5. Set realistic deadlines



# **Getting started -The Results Section**

Try to be objective – do you believe your results?  
(if you don't the reviewers won't)

# Writing the methods section

- This is usually the easiest section, so try to do this at the same time as the results
- Don't reinvent the wheel - look at other publications that use the same techniques, reference other papers
- Check that you have included all the methods relevant for the paper (and not extra ones)

# The Introduction

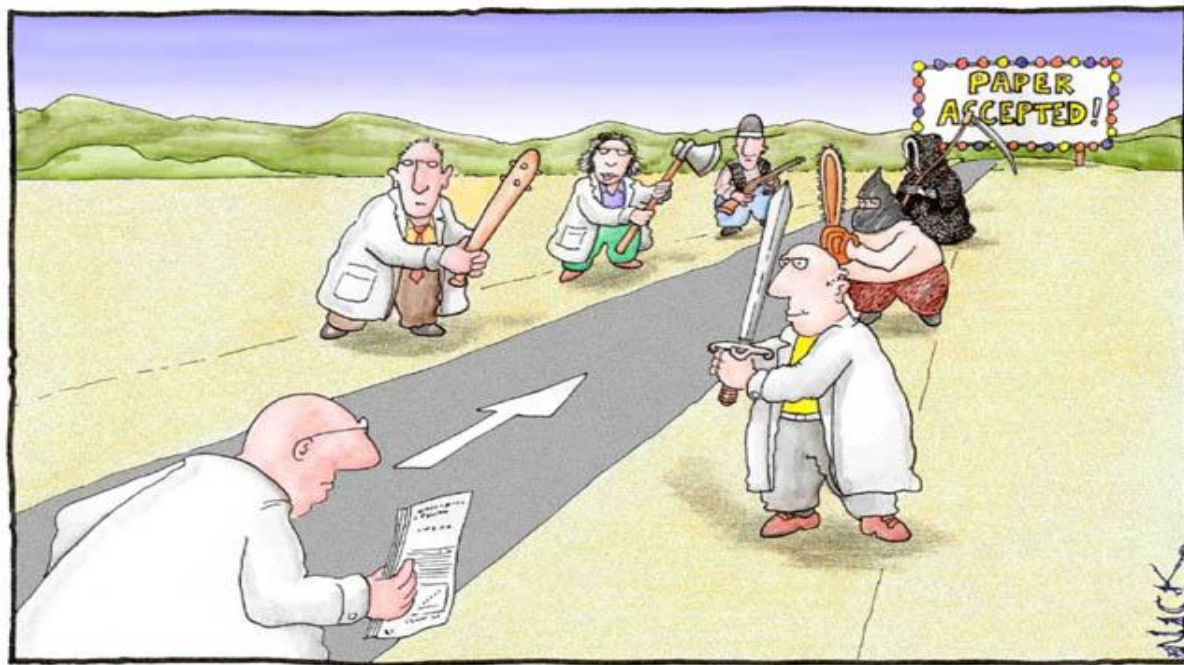
- Shouldn't be overly long, limit to about 500-600 words if you can
- Need to set the scene and justify why what you have done is important.
- Link to your conclusions (usually write last)
- Needs to excite the reader

# The Discussion

- I find this the hardest bit to write
- Find your own preferred way of tackling this section
- I start with subheadings and dot-points
- Practice working with someone who has a lot of experience, get feedback on early drafts and take comments on board



# The wonderful world of Peer Review



Most scientists regarded the new streamlined peer-review process as 'quite an improvement.'



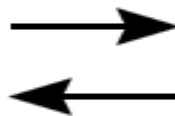
Scientists study something.



Scientists write about their results.



Journal editor receives an article and sends it out for peer review.



Peer reviewers read the article and provide feedback to the editor.



Editor may send reviewer comments to the scientists who may then revise and resubmit the article for further review. If an article does not maintain sufficiently high scientific standards, it may be rejected at this point.



If an article finally meets editorial and peer standards it is published in a journal.

## The peer review process

# Which Journal?

- Discuss with your mentor/co-authors
- What is the audience you want?
- Impact factor – aim high (but not too high!)
- Look for special calls for papers
- Follow the instructions for authors!

# Submitting – things you might miss

- Think about suggested reviewers and reviewers to exclude (make a list)
- Suggestion for editors
- Cover letters
- Getting signatures
- Check the pdf carefully before submitting for formatting errors

# **Before you submit**

- Have someone proof-read the document for typos and inconsistencies
- Check that the references to tables and figures in the text are correct
- Check and double-check formatting
- Double-check the references
- Try to read as a reviewer....

# What annoys me as a reviewer?

- Typos and poor grammar
- Missing references
- Too many acronyms
- Methods not clearly described
- Overly complex tables
- Discussion too long and hard to read
- Dodgy correlations
- **Results don't support the conclusions!**

# Dealing with reviewers comments

- You are allowed 24 hours after reading the reviewers comments to be upset
- After this – set yourself a target to get the reviewers comments answered and back within a week
- Spend time on the reviewers comments, use them as an opportunity to improve your paper
- Helpful to start reviewing papers yourself

# The art of addressing reviewers comments

- Reviewers are human!
- Spend time and address all of the comments
- If you don't agree with a comment, you can say so, but need to present evidence
- Highlight where reviewers have given positive feedback
- Make the suggested changes to the manuscript if they don't markedly change the paper

## **Some helpful phrases**

- “We thank the reviewers for their careful reading and critical appraisal of the manuscript.”
- “We were pleased that the reviewers of this manuscript considered that it provided an important and much needed analysis of this topic”

# The art of addressing reviewers comments

## ADDRESSING REVIEWER COMMENTS

BAD REVIEWS ON YOUR PAPER? FOLLOW THESE GUIDELINES AND YOU MAY YET GET IT PAST THE EDITOR:

### Reviewer comment:

"The method/device/paradigm the authors propose is clearly wrong."

### How NOT to respond:

✗ "Yes, we know. We thought we could still get a paper out of it. Sorry."

### Correct response:

✓ "The reviewer raises an interesting concern. However, as the focus of this work is exploratory and not performance-based, validation was not found to be of critical importance to the contribution of the paper."

### Reviewer comment:

"The authors fail to reference the work of Smith et al, who solved the same problem 20 years ago."

### How NOT to respond:

✗ "Huh. We didn't think anybody had read that. Actually, their solution is better than ours."

### Correct response:

✓ "The reviewer raises an interesting concern. However, our work is based on completely different first principles (we use different variable names), and has a much more attractive graphical user interface."

### Reviewer comment:

"This paper is poorly written and scientifically unsound. I do not recommend it for publication."

### How NOT to respond:

✗ "You #&@\*% reviewer! I know who you are! I'm gonna get you when it's my turn to review!"

### Correct response:

✓ "The reviewer raises an interesting concern. However, we feel the reviewer did not fully comprehend the scope of the work, and misjudged the results based on incorrect assumptions."

[www.phdcomics.com](http://www.phdcomics.com)

## **Before you resubmit...**

- Make sure you have addressed all of the reviewers comments (major and minor)
- If you say that you have made changes to the paper – make sure you have actually done them!
- Make the changes to the paper easy to find – track changes, highlight, page and line references

# Before you resubmit...



- Check the replies to reviewers against the changes to the paper
- Re-read one last time
- Don't forget to write a cover letter to the editor for this revised version
- Highlight positive comments from the reviewers and address any major changes in this cover letter

## **Publishing – general advice**

- Write up experiments as you do them if you can
- Set time aside for writing
- Get feedback from your co-workers on early drafts
- Don't get discouraged by rejection!
- Use reviewers comments as an opportunity to improve your papers
- If at first you don't succeed, try, try, try again!

**And Finally... Remember to celebrate  
your publications!**

